

colleagues to join Chairman GRASSLEY and me in passing this important legislation as soon as possible.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. DORGAN, and Mr. HARKIN):

S. 3768. A bill to prohibit the procurement of victim-activated landmines and other weapons that are designed to be victim-activated; to the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, today I join Senator LEAHY in introducing the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006, which will prohibit the procurement of victim-activated landmines. Antipersonnel, victim-activated landmines are small, inexpensive weapons that kill or maim people upon contact. Indiscriminate use has produced many civilian casualties and has resulted in an international effort to control or ban these weapons.

As a member of both the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and Foreign Operations, I have supported efforts to create alternatives to victim-activated munitions, to mitigate the associated risks for innocent civilians, and to help those who have been inadvertently harmed. The United States sets an example for the world by remaining a global leader in providing funds for mine clearance, mine risk education, and mine survivor assistance activities. According to the Congressional Research Service, the United States has dedicated an estimated \$500 million for demining efforts over the last 10 years. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Defense, in conjunction with industry partners, has developed technology which permits the deployment of mines that cannot be activated by the victim. This "man-in-the-loop" technology will ensure that innocent civilians are not harmed by mines.

On September 18, 1997, diplomats from almost 90 countries met in Oslo, Norway, and adopted the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, commonly referred to as the Ottawa Convention or the Mine Ban Treaty. The Mine Ban Treaty went into effect on March 1, 1999, and mandates that countries discontinue the production, stockpile, use or exportation of antipersonnel landmines. It further mandates that countries clear their territory of mines and destroy stockpiles. The Mine Ban Treaty is credited with the reduction in victims and procurement of mines.

Although the U.S. has declined to participate in the treaty, the U.S. continues to lead the world in dollars spent on aid and efforts to help foreign nations demine fields and dispose of thousands of antipersonnel landmines, which is a costly and dangerous undertaking. The U.S. has not used antipersonnel mines since the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Since 1992, the U.S. has prohibited exportation of antipersonnel

mines and U.S. production was halted in 1997.

A review of the facts surrounding landmines and the tragic consequences that have resulted from their use has convinced me that the indiscriminate use of these weapons must be stopped. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines estimates that there are more than 80 million landmines in the ground in more than 80 countries and that 15,000–20,000 people are maimed or killed by landmines each year. UNICEF estimates that 30 to 40 percent of mine victims are children under 15 years old. Millions more suffer from the economic and psychological impact of these weapons.

Innocent civilians in foreign countries are not the only victims that suffer the debilitating effects of these weapons. Landmines have injured and killed thousands of U.S. and allied troops in every U.S.-fought conflict since World War II, including those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although landmines cost as little as \$3 to produce, they can cost as much as \$1,000 per mine to clear.

The legislation introduced today calls on the United States to continue to set an example for other countries by implementing a ban on the procurement of victim-activated weapons systems. Further, it recognizes that the U.S. has acquired reliable technology that enables all weapons systems to be equipped with man-in-the-loop targeting and triggering capabilities, meaning that the device can be deployed and triggered only in response to an intentional action by a person.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am today introducing, with my friend from Pennsylvania, Senator SPECTER, and Senators DORGAN and HARKIN, The Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006.

This legislation would prohibit the procurement of victim-activated landmines and other weapons that are designed to be victim-activated. It builds on a long history of leadership by the Congress on the issue of landmines, which indiscriminately kill and maim innocent people, as well as U.S. troops, around the world.

I will have another statement on this subject when we return from the August recess, but I want to make a couple of points today.

First, Senators should know that since 1997 when an international treaty banning the manufacture, use, export and stockpiling of antipersonnel landmines was initialed at Ottawa, 154 nations have signed and 151 have ratified the treaty.

This is an extraordinary achievement, for which Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's Foreign Minister at the time, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines deserve enormous credit. Unfortunately, the United States is not a signatory to the treaty and at one time even worked against it.

Thanks to the treaty, the manufacture and export of antipersonnel land-

mines has decreased significantly, and the number of victims has also declined. But mines continue to be a weapon of choice, especially for rebel groups such as the FARC in Colombia and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Second, the United States has not exported antipersonnel mines since 1992, produced antipersonnel mines since 1997, or used anti personnel mines since 1991. This is not a weapon we need.

Moreover, for the past decade the Department of Defense has been developing alternatives to landmines. The goal has been to replace mines that cannot distinguish between an enemy combatant and a U.S. soldier, an innocent child, a farmer or a refugee.

That program has produced man-in-the-loop technology that is ready to be deployed in a new generation of mines that are not victim-activated.

I have long supported this program and I commend the Department of Defense for its support for the development of this technology. I believe it will provide the U.S. military with the force multiplier and protection afforded by conventional landmines without impeding the mobility of our troops or endangering innocent civilians. It will enable the military to finally stop using or stockpiling victim-activated landmines that have no place in the arsenal of a civilized nation, much less the world's only superpower.

As we see daily in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, civilians bear the brunt of wars today. They do not have body armor or armored vehicles. They are routinely caught in the crossfire. At any moment they are at risk of being killed or maimed by a landmine or other improvised explosive that lies in wait until triggered by whoever steps on it or drives over it.

I want to emphasize that the need for this legislation is not because the United States is causing the mine problem. It is not. As I mentioned, we have not used or exported antipersonnel mines for 15 years, despite fighting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are also the largest contributor to humanitarian demining in countries that have been severely affected by mines, and we support programs to assist mine survivors.

But just as a solution to the Middle East conflict depends on the active, sustained engagement and leadership of the United States, so does the problem of landmines.

As was the case with poison gas more than half a century ago, the solution to the mine problem is the stigmatization of these indiscriminate weapons so the political price of using them serves as a deterrent. Will some rebel groups or rogue nations continue to defy the international norm? Undoubtedly. But by setting an example and using our influence we can reduce their numbers significantly to the benefit of our troops and the innocent.

I again want to thank my friend Senator SPECTER, who has supported legislation to ban landmines for more than a decade.